

Little Indian Creek Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2016-2025



Lisa D. Allen
Forestry Division Chief

4-11-16
Date

Little Indian Creek Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

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RCT Chair

Jennifer Fakes 3/21/16
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FORESTRY DIVISION

Forestry Management Chief

John Tuttle 4/8/16
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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Little Indian Creek Conservation Area, # 7837
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1978
- **Acreage:** 3,939 acres
- **Counties:** Franklin, Washington
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for wildlife, forest and aquatic resources and compatible recreational opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of Little Indian Creek Conservation Area (CA) is a healthy forest/woodland complex supporting aquatic resources and streams.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. Priority Areas:** Meramec River Hills Priority Forest Landscape, Meramec River Watershed Audubon Important Bird Area
- B. Natural Areas:** None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

- A. Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed.
- B. Caves:** None
- C. Springs:** Yes, records kept with the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) Natural History Biologist.
- D. Other:** Occurs in the East Meramec Oak Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association and the Courtois Oak-Pine Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association. The East Meramec Oak Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association consists of broad ridges and moderate slopes that give way to narrow ridges and steeper slopes near streams. Historically, oak woodland and forest with scattered glade/woodland complexes dominated. The Courtois Oak-Pine Woodland/Forest Hills Land Type Association consists of broad ridges and moderate slopes that grade into narrow ridges and steeper slopes near numerous

stream valleys. Historically, pine, oak-pine and mixed-oak woodland and forest dominated the area (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 7 gravel parking lots (American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible)
- 3 gravel public access roads (~2.4 miles)
- 1 primitive campground (12 designated camp spots)
- 3 single privies (ADA accessible)
- 1 unstaffed shooting range with 25-, 50- and 100-yard target holders (ADA accessible)
- 1 shotgun range
- 1 12.1-mile double loop multiple-use trail (hike/bike/horse)
- 3 gravel service roads (~3.6 miles)
- 3 low-water slabs
- 2 foot bridges
- 6 road pipes
- 8 gates
- 1 pond dam
- 1 small fishing pond
- 14 wildlife watering holes (~1 acre)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations:

- Reservation of mining and mineral rights (Township 40N, Range 1W, E½, SW¼, Section 17; SE¼, Section 18, part of N½, NE¼, Section 19)
- Reservation of graveyard (Township 40N, Range 1W, NW¼, NE¼, Section 18)

B. Federal Interest: Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.

C. Easements:

- Easement over existing ridge road (Book 114, 275 in the records of Washington County)
- Easement granted to Leo P. Hawkins for ingress and egress over existing easement on ridge road (Book 207, page 838 in the records of Washington County)
- Drainage easement granted to State of Missouri (Book 114, page 275 in the records of Washington County)
- Power-line easement

- D. Cultural Resources Findings:** Yes, records kept with the Department Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the Department Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Endangered Species:** None observed.
- F. Boundary Issues:** None.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Little Indian Creek CA contains approximately 3,808 acres of forest, woodland and glades and 96 acres of fields (Figure 4). The forest and woodland on Little Indian Creek CA is generally described as woodland, woodland/glade complex, upland forest and bottomland forest (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2012):

- 1) **Woodland:** Mixed oak woodlands occur on ridge tops, exposed slopes and protected slopes. Post oak woodlands occur mainly on ridges and exposed slopes. Pine oak woodlands occur mainly on ridges and exposed slopes in the southwest part of the area.
- 2) **Woodland/Glade Complex:** Glades and associated woodlands are mainly located on exposed slopes. An extensive complex of woodlands and glades is located along the eastern side of California Branch.
- 3) **Upland Forest:** The white oak forest type is the main upland forest type and occurs mainly on protected slopes. This forest type includes red oak and other oaks as well as hickory and other hardwoods.
- 4) **Bottomland Forest:** Riverfront forest is located along Little Indian Creek and includes ash, hackberry, sycamore, oak, walnut, box elder and other bottomland species. Mixed oak hickory forest is located along Mule Barn Hollow, Simmons Hollow and California Branch.

In 2002 and 2012, portions of the woodland glade complex along California Branch were burned by prescribed fire. In 2013, a portion of the woodland glade complex was burned by wildfire. Cedar was felled by chain saw on several glades in 2012. Sugar maple was treated with herbicide on a portion of Compartment 4 on the east side of the area in 2012; followed by a timber sale aimed at utilizing recently dead and dying white oak which was extensive in the compartment; and thinning crowded forests and woodlands. Other forest compartments have had little active management during the Department's ownership of the area.

Fields include tree plantings, old fields reverting to forest cover, warm-season grass, limited food plots and limited old fields maintained in a state of early succession. The Department has been monitoring and eradicating feral hogs since they began causing damage at Little Indian Creek CA in 2009. The Department has also partnered with several surrounding landowners who have cooperated in feral hog reduction.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain healthy forests and woodlands.
- 2) Maintain limited open-land habitat.
- 3) Protect terrestrial resources from feral hogs.

Management Objective 1: Maintain healthy forests, woodlands and glades.

Strategy 1: Monitor forests, woodlands and glades for invasive exotic vegetation, diseases and insects; control, as needed. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: In accordance with Forestry Division's forest compartment inventory schedule, conduct forest/woodland inventories, formulate prescriptions (e.g., harvesting, non-commercial thinning, prescribed fire, etc.), and carry out prescriptions to maintain forests and woodlands in a healthy, sustainable and wildlife-friendly condition. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Restore and maintain glades by removing undesirable trees and/or conducting prescribed fire, as time allows. (Forestry)

Strategy 4: During forest management activities follow best management practices in the *Missouri Watershed Protection Practice Recommended Practices for Missouri Forests: 2014 Management Guidelines for Maintaining Forested Watersheds to Protect Streams* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2014) guidelines and *Watershed and Stream Management Guidelines for Lands and Waters Managed by Missouri Department of Conservation* (Missouri Department of Conservation, 2009). (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Maintain limited open-land habitat.

Strategy 1: Monitor open lands for invasive exotic vegetation, diseases and insects. Develop strategies to eliminate or reduce infestations. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Small warm-season grass fields may be maintained by mechanical, fire or chemical methods. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Provide limited food plots and early successional old field habitat by mechanical, fire or chemical methods, as needed. (Forestry)

Strategy 4: Maintain tree plantings until established. (Forestry)

Strategy 5: Allow the majority of open lands to reforest. (Forestry)

Management Objective 3: Protect terrestrial and aquatic resources from feral hogs.

Strategy 1: Monitor area for feral hogs. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Report feral hog issues to the Regional Feral Hog Coordinator/Wildlife Damage Biologist. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Work with the Regional Feral Hog Coordinator/Wildlife Damage Biologist and Feral Hog Task Force to eliminate feral hogs from the area. (Forestry)

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

Little Indian Creek CA contains several miles of headwater streams with high gradients, long riffles and short pools. The majority of streams have intermittent surface flows.

The Department owns only a small portion of the watershed. Subsequently, the streams are subject to degradation from past and current in-stream practices and incompatible land uses in the watershed. These contribute a high gravel bed load, which limits in-stream habitat available for aquatic organisms.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain or improve aquatic systems.

Management Objective 1: Maintain or improve stream function, including riparian corridor areas and the supply and transport of sediments and gravel.

Strategy 1: Maintain or improve terrestrial natural communities in the riparian areas of streams to the extent possible (see Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations) throughout the duration of this plan. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Assess the integrity of stream channels and drainage ways, and the need to implement stabilization projects or repair stream-crossing structures. (Fisheries, Design and Development)

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide hunting opportunities.
- 2) Provide target shooting opportunities.
- 3) Provide horseback riding, hiking and biking opportunities.
- 4) Provide camping opportunities in a safe and enjoyable family-friendly atmosphere.

Management Objective 1: Provide hunting opportunities.

Strategy 1: Conduct long-term and annual management activities that will provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Provide target shooting opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain unstaffed shooting range in a safe and accessible condition that invites public use. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Inspect shooting range biannually and provide recommendations to the Area Manager. (Outreach and Education)

Management Objective 3: Provide horseback riding, hiking and biking opportunities.

Strategy 1: Maintain multiple-use trails in a safe and accessible condition that invites public use. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Modify multiple-use trails, as needed (and as approved), to serve the public's needs or reduce trail maintenance, with no net loss of trail length. (Forestry)

Strategy 3: Expand the area where horse trailers may park. Investigate options for where expanded parking would work best. (Forestry, Design and Development)

Management Objective 4: Provide camping opportunities in a safe and enjoyable family-friendly atmosphere.

Strategy 1: Explore the feasibility of allowing open camping at designated sites in the primitive campground from Sept. 15 through May 15 to support hunting opportunities and to discourage warm-weather related unlawful or prohibited behavior. (Forestry)

Strategy 2: Install a gate at the campground entrance to support Strategy 1. (Forestry)

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure.
- 2) Acquisition of land.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure in accordance with Department guidelines. (Forestry)

Management Objective 2: Encourage efficient utilization of small parking lot and discourage improper parking along road by Little Indian Creek.

Strategy 1: Submit small construction request to reshape small parking lot north of Little Indian Creek. (Forestry)

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, inholdings and adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Terrestrial Resource Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 2	X			X				X		
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 4	X	X								
Public Use Management										
<i>Objective 3</i>										
Strategy 2	X	X	X							
Strategy 3	X	X	X							
<i>Objective 4</i>										
Strategy 1	X	X								
Strategy 2	X	X								
Administrative Considerations										
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1	X	X								

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Little Indian Creek CA is in Franklin and Washington Counties, about 8 miles south of St. Clair. The Department acquired the majority of the area in 1978 and manages it for forest, woodland, glade and stream habitat; and to provide the public opportunities for hunting, shooting, horseback riding, hiking, bicycling and camping.

The 3,939-acre area, named for the stream which runs through a narrow part of the area, is located in the Indian Creek Watershed of the Meramec River Basin. The area is mainly forested. Open areas include tree plantings, old fields reverting to forest cover, a small warm-season grass field, limited food plots, limited old fields maintained in a state of early succession, gravel bars and public use areas.

The area is open to the public from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Special facilities include seven gravel parking lots, three gravel public access roads, a primitive campground with 12 designated camp spots, three single privies, an unstaffed shooting range, a shotgun range and a 12-mile double loop multiple-use trail.

Current Land and Water Types:

Land/Water Type	Acres	Feet	% of Area
Woodland	1,867		48
Upland Forest	1,262		32
Woodland/Glade Complex	389		10
Bottomland Forest	290		7
Old Fields	83		2
Developed	33		1
Warm-Season Grass Fields	13		<1
Impounded Water	2		<1
Total	3,939		100
Stream Frontage		82,368	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Little Indian Creek Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period August 1–31, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received 14 comments from 13 respondents (Appendix A). The Little Indian Creek Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through Little Indian Creek Conservation Area public comment period

Suggests planting crops or food plots (for deer and dove hunting) in some old fields.

We maintain limited food plots on Little Indian Creek. Corn, sunflower, soybeans, and various green browse plots are planted and maintained in the California Branch area, as well as on the east end of the area along Little Indian Creek. Many other old fields have been planted with trees or are being allowed to reforest naturally to provide riparian buffer and improve stream quality of California Branch and Little Indian Creek. Overall, our management emphasis of this area focuses on maintaining and enhancing forest, woodland, and glade natural communities. These practices provide abundant natural forage and habitat for a diversity of wildlife.

Suggests closing shooting range during firearms deer season.

Although we understand the frustration some area visitors and neighbors have with the noise produced at the shooting range, we do not see closing the shooting range during firearms deer season as a feasible option. This is an especially important time for hunters to be able to sight in firearms to help ensure a quality hunt. While the noise may aggravate people, we do not believe that the noise from the range during deer season has significant impact on deer movement patterns. This is a busy range throughout the fall, and deer should be accustomed to the noise. However, for those visitors and neighbors wanting to minimize exposure to noise from the range, keep in mind that the range is closed on all Mondays. Additionally, the Conservation Department maintains a number of other conservation areas open to public hunting nearby that do not include a shooting range. Meramec Conservation Area (4,045 acres) and Pea Ridge Conservation Area (8,390 acres) are both within 10 miles or less of Little Indian Creek.

Concern that automatic weapons are being used at the shooting range.

Automatic weapons are prohibited at the Little Indian Creek CA shooting range. If area users notice that automatic weapons are being used, please report this offense to local conservation agents. Up-to-date contact information for the conservation agent(s) assigned to a given county can be found at our website (www.mdc.mo.gov) under “Local Contact”, or call the St. Louis Regional Office (Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. 636-441-4554).

Suggests designating all trails on the area (including service roads) as multi-use. Offers to assist with trail maintenance and rerouting trails.

The Department is evaluating the need for more multi-use trails. We will not be able to open all service roads to multiple uses, as this will create a large increase in needed trail maintenance work and investment of Department resources on an area that already has 12 miles of multi-use trails. Volunteer service is greatly appreciated, and there will certainly be some opportunity for volunteers to assist with trail maintenance on this area (e.g. using loppers to prune vegetation along the trail edge, and assist with some minor rock projects). However, many major trail maintenance projects often require the use of larger equipment that can only be utilized by Department employees and also substantial financial and time investments by the Department regardless of the great contributions of volunteers.

Concern over how many service roads have been added in the last several years.

Over the last five years, only one new service road has been added (open to authorized vehicles only). This road was created to provide access for a 2013 timber harvest that was needed to address forest health and wildlife habitat issues. It will continue to receive limited use by Department staff in order to carry out management activities. Aside from this one addition, many improvements have been made to existing service roads on the area to improve their utility to area users (i.e. service roads that double as multi-use trails), to improve our access for area management purposes, and to keep erosion concerns to a minimum. These improvements included re-grading some portions, building water diversion structures, and adding rock in areas that needed it.

Suggests better marking of multi-use trails and providing updated trail maps.

We have been working directly with the Show-Me Missouri Chapter of Back Country Horsemen to improve trail marking along the trail system at Little Indian Creek. If visitors have specific suggestions or areas of concerns regarding trail marking, we are glad to consider them. Suggestions can be provided directly to the Area Manager at 573-468-3335 ext. 6602. Maps of the trail system are currently up to date, but as changes to the trail system occur, maps will also be updated accordingly.

Suggests adding electric hookups, water, and horse ties at campground. Suggests allowing horses at camping area.

The Department only offers primitive camping opportunities. If individuals are looking for a camping experience that provides electricity and water, they might consider one of the nearby state parks or a private campground. Opportunities for equestrian camping are also present in the Mark Twain National Forest to the south of Little Indian Creek CA. Horses in the camping area could potentially lead to degradation of the camp area through erosion and an excess accumulation of horse manure, which could adversely impact the quality of Little Indian Creek.

Suggests limiting amount of days campers can stay at campground. Consider a reservation system for the campground to help control litter.

The *Wildlife Code of Missouri* currently states that camping is allowed for a maximum of 14 days in designated campgrounds and where dispersed primitive camping is allowed. We are still investigating our options on how to best manage camping on this area.

Supports expanding area where horse trailers may park. Suggests additional equestrian parking lot at some distance from the existing parking lot. Suggests allowing horse trailer parking in camping area during the summer months (if camping is closed). Requests the ability to provide input on design of new equestrian parking lot.

We are currently looking into the feasibility of constructing a new equestrian parking lot on the southwest side of Little Indian Creek CA off of Hwy A. If this lot is constructed, a portion of the rocked service road already in place will be classified as trail. This will allow riders to ride from one side of the area to the other, provide access to the entire multi-use trail loop, or allow riders to take 1 of 2 smaller loop trails.

If we were to close camping during the summer months, we will consider options for how to best utilize this area during the months it is closed. However, it may be necessary to gate off the camping area to vehicles during these months to prevent unauthorized camping.

Suggests improving restrooms.

Without access to running water we are limited in what we can do with the restrooms. The restrooms at Little Indian Creek Conservation Area currently comply with the existing infrastructure maintenance standards of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Department staff tries to balance the attention we give the restroom with the amount of use it is getting and other competing demands. However, we will keep a close eye on this balance to determine if more attention is needed.

Suggests better marking of area boundaries.

We maintain boundary lines at Little Indian Creek on a 5 year maintenance schedule with a combination of blue paint on trees and boundary signs. The lines at Little Indian Creek CA were marked during this winter of 2015/2016. If trespass occurs from the conservation area onto private property, the appropriate county conservation agent should be contacted to assist. Up-to-date contact information for the conservation agent(s) assigned to a given county can be found at our website (www.mdc.mo.gov) under “Local Contact”, or call the St. Louis Regional Office (Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. 636-441-4554).

Suggest adding signs to low-water crossing asking people not to stand on it when vehicles are crossing.

We will look into this suggestion and consider placing a sign as recommended.

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2012). Geographic Information Systems layer. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2014). *Missouri watershed protection practice recommended practices for Missouri forests: 2014 management guidelines for maintaining forested watersheds to protect streams*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri.

Nigh, T. A., & Schroeder, W. A. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographic Map

Figure 4: Current Vegetation Map

Figure 5: Easement Map

Figure 1: Area Map

LITTLE INDIAN CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

FRANKLIN AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES
3,939 ACRES

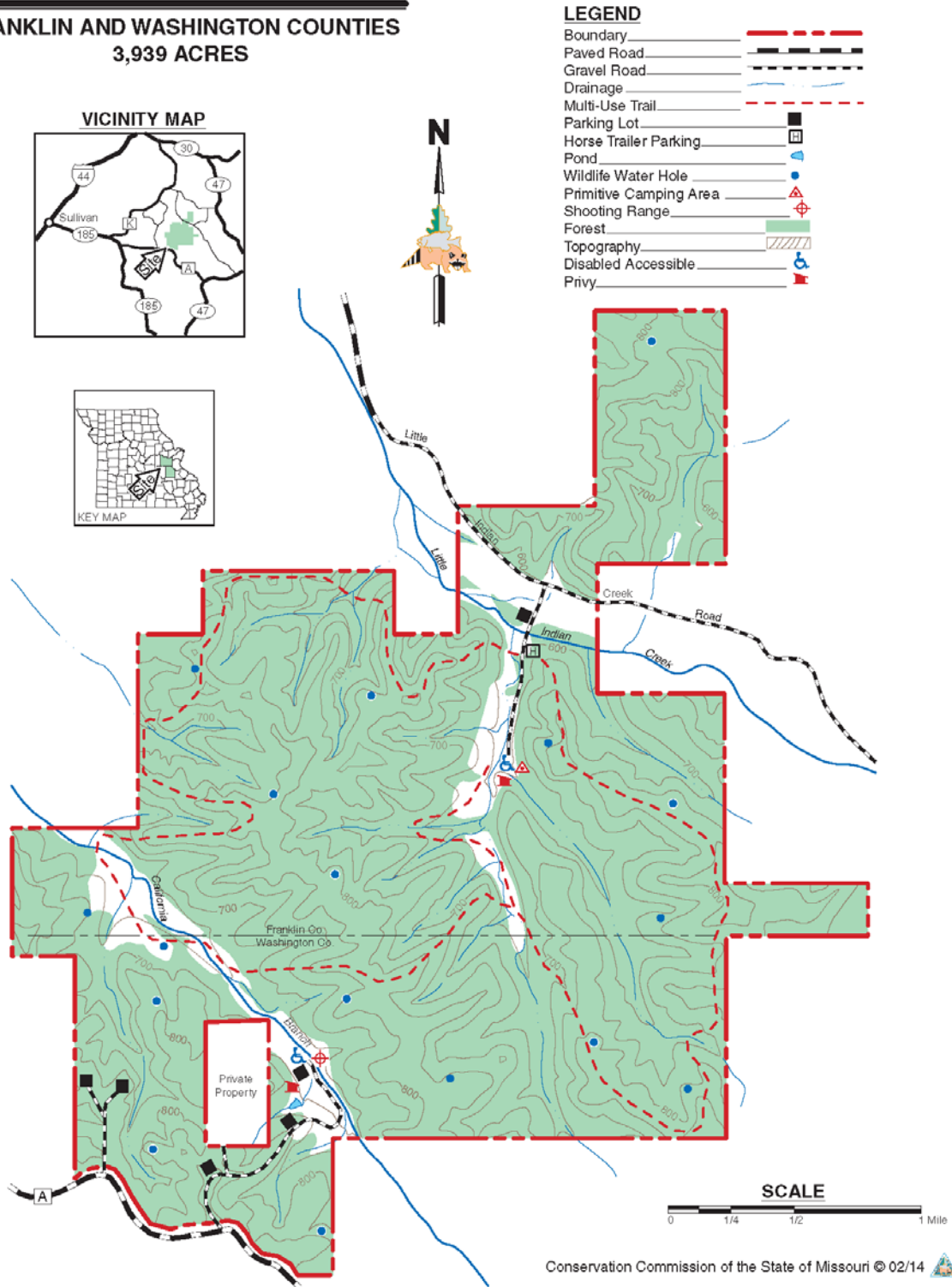


Figure 2: Aerial Map

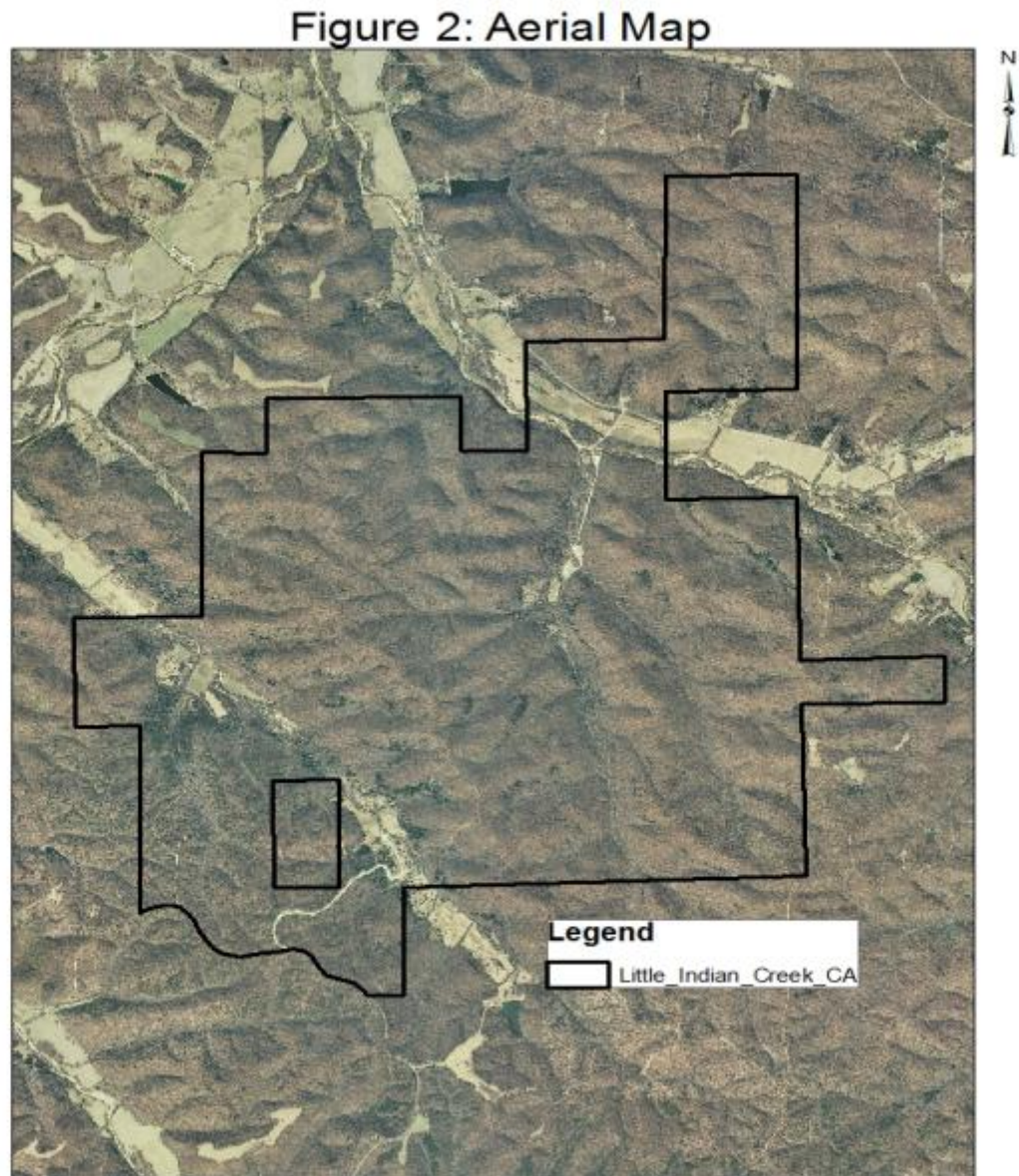


Figure 3: Topographic Map

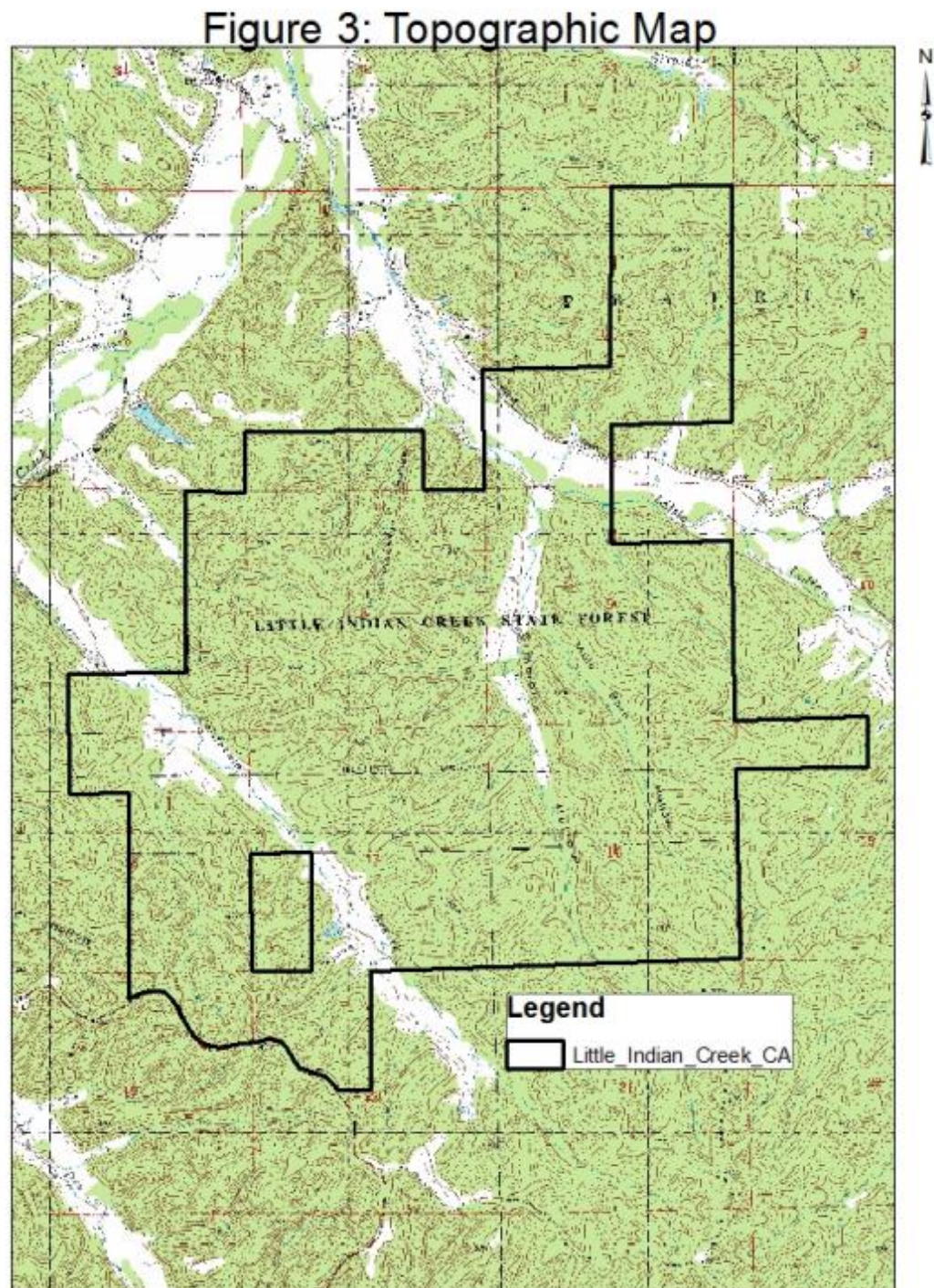


Figure 4: Land Cover Map

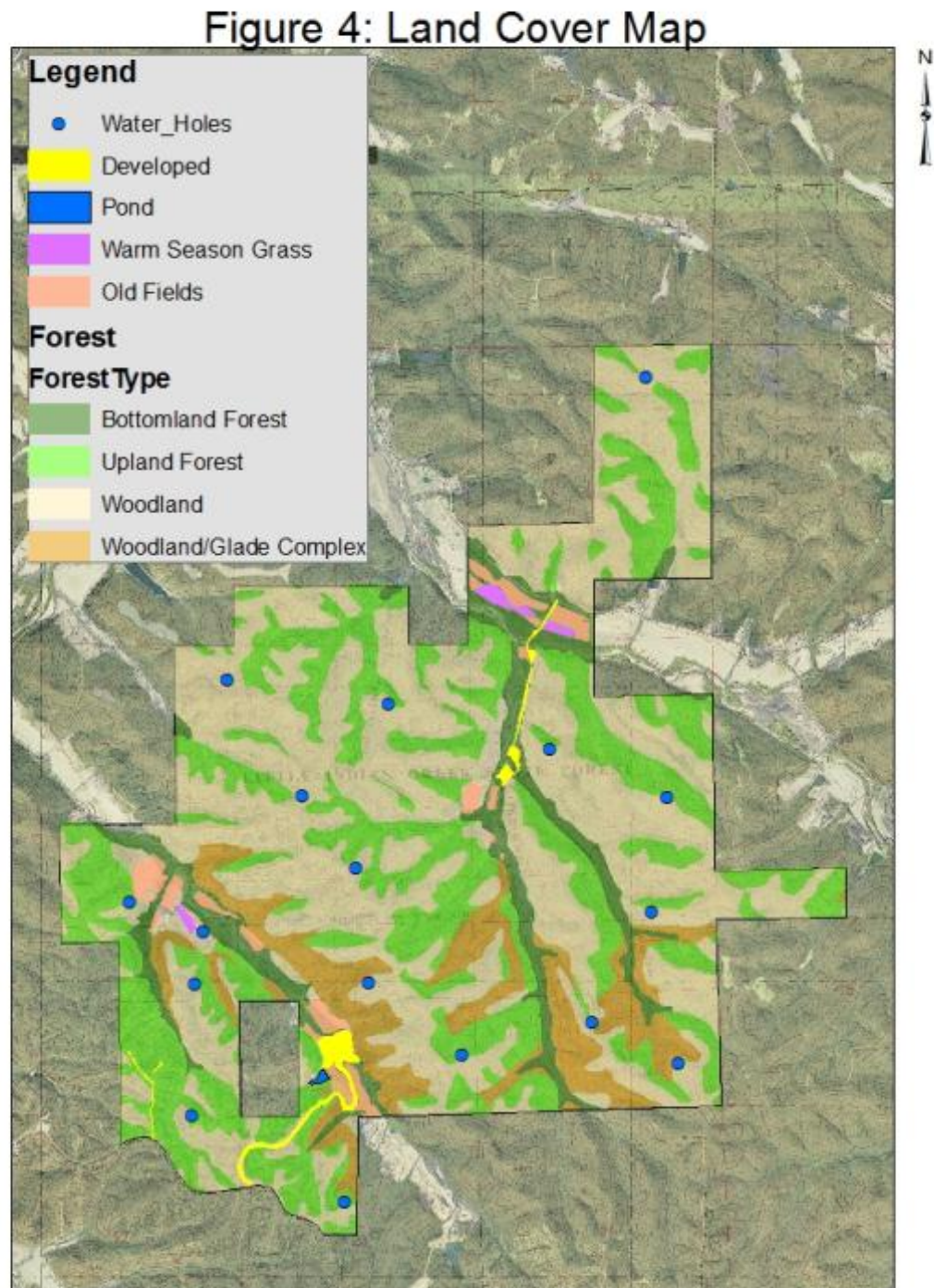
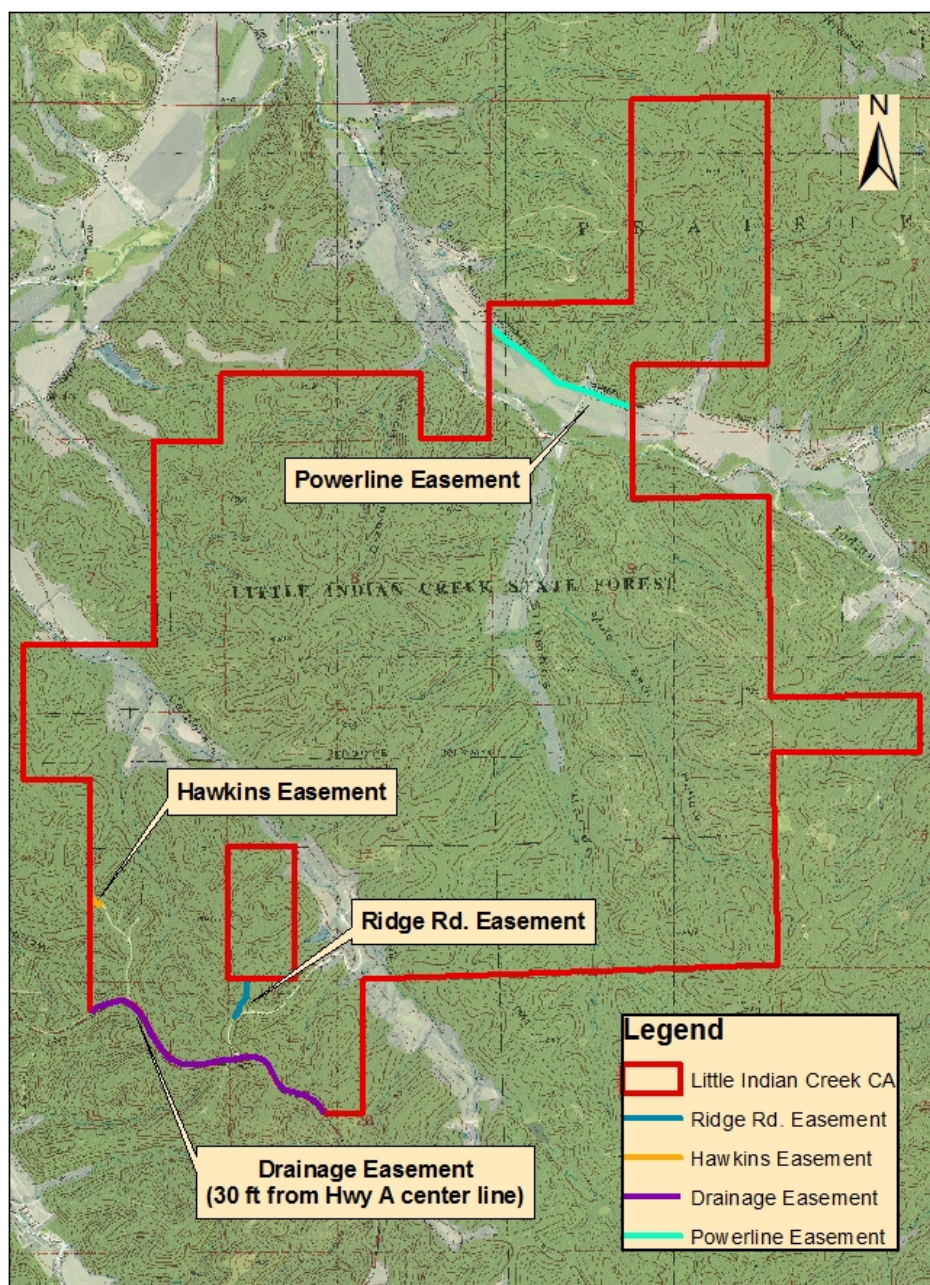


Figure 5: Easement Map

Figure 5: Easement Map



Appendix A. Little Indian Creek Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (August 1-31, 2015)

<p>Improve restrooms</p> <p>Put in electric hookups and water at Campground with horse ties or stalls. 3-4 would really improve area for equestrian use.</p>
<p>Much needed control over campers. I would like to see a shorter limit on length of time at campsites. Possible reservations supplying names at campsites to control litter left at campsites. Fines could then be involved to help fund clean up. Area boundaries marked better to control trespass.</p> <p>Would like to see the shooting range closed after the beginning of deer season. The only days it is tolerable is on Mondays when closed. Other days it seems as anti hunters go to the range and constantly shoot. Also sounds as if automatic weapons are being used.</p> <p>I own property that borders the Washington, Franklin county lines and have had problems with trespassers and theft.</p>
<p>The area is very nice. love being able to hunt on the land. It has beautiful areas. with that being said when deer season comes the rifle range stays open. when hunting on the conservation land or surrounding properties the range is overly used during the deer seasons. The blasts come every second, making it very hard to listen while hunting. From time to time it even seems as though there are automatic guns being fired. although the land itself is nice there are plenty of open space and fields that go unattended. If the conservation could plant some fields or seed some of the open areas it would only help bring wild life into the area, along with surrounding areas. This will not only benefit hunting, but also help to make the allotted land that much more scenic. We thank you for what you have done to the area and hope that you can at least eliminate the unnecessary and sometimes dangerous gun fire coming from the range during rifle season.</p>
<p>I would love to see the fields planted again to provide the area with a greater opportunity to hunt doves in September. My only other comment would be to adjust the rifle range open/close times. On the first Saturday of the firearms season until the close of the firearms season the rifle range should be shut down.</p>
<p>I have ridden the trails at Little Indian Creek many times. Equestrians (who are many in this area) are very much in need of riding trails. We are willing to help with maintenance (Mo Back Country groups) and would love the opportunity to be represented in any further discussion. Many thanks!!</p>
<p>I like the plan presented, but would like to add a couple of items that would make the area even more enjoyable. First, increase food plot plantings for wildlife. Second, please consider closing the gun range during the fall deer gun season.</p>

<p>I would also like to see in the future more planting of food plots for deer and especially for dove hunting. The area could provide excellent dove hunting with the proper food plots. Already has water and cover.</p>
<p>I would like for the gun range be shutdown over fire arms deer season.</p>
<p>I have ridden horses there for years. I have seen the improvements to the area. The Back Country Horseman have done a great job with the Baker Cemetery, the hitching posts, mounting blocks, picnic table and pavilion. The trails are well taken care of. Here are a few improvements I would like to see;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A larger parking lot at the trail head for horse trailers. There are signs posted that say "Horsetrailer parking only" but lots of times there are cars parked there, that are there for swimming. Sometimes there not always considerate of where they park and park right in front of trucks with trailers. Which doesn't allow for much room to get a truck and trailer out. Also a larger parking area for the swimmers, by the slab. 2. Camping with your equine. I know myself and many friends would like to camp there for the weekend. Please add this to your plan. I think it would help improve the type of people who are camping there & detour some of the unwanted activities. What is the reason for not allowing it? 3. Signs on the slab, asking people not to stand on it when cars/trucks/horsetrailer are crossing it. 4. Keep the trails clean and clear, for all users. <p>I read the plan, and it seems to be along these same lines, keep the conservation area natural, improve the parking lots. Keep the unwanted activities from there.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
<p>I hope to see the new horsetrailer parking lot started this year.I also would like to see all trails considered multi-use; that way Back Country could do maintenance on all trails and on gravel maintenance roads also. Back Country is a service organization and we want to keep our conservation area's free of trash and the trails clear for everyone to enjoy. Thank you</p>
<p>Additional parking for equestrian trail users would be good especially if the additional parking can be located at some distance from the existing parking lot that is often congested in warm weather due to it's proximity to the creek where many people congregate to enjoy the water. Additional trails for multi-use would be desirable. It seems that the many service roads that criss-cross the conservation area could be used equestrians, hikers and bikers without additional expense. Missouri residents have contributed to the construction and maintenance of the service roads through their tax dollars. Additional trails would mean less concentrated use of the trails</p>

currently designated as multi-use.

Our chapter is please to comment on the management plan as we recently discussed with MDC staff members in Sullivan. We agree that there needs to be a new or larger parking lot for equestrian use. The plan to locate one off of Hwy A seems to be logical the only draw back is there is no easy access for watering your horses after riding. If you close the campground down during the summer months you could also allow horse trailer parking in the camping area since we are not allowed to ride there during hunting season. In the last several years we have watched a massive amount of gravel service roads being built within the conservation area, which are all marked with signs NO HORSEBACK RIDING ALLOWED as well as many other logging roads and trails within the area. We can not understand why all these roads are needed, when you look at the map I have showing all the roads that we looked at in our last meeting at the Sullivan office it looks like a neighborhood was build in the conservation area with so many roads. We can only imagine that these roads cost the tax payers a lot of money, and can not understand why they are not open for us to use. There is no reason that you should not be able to hike, bike or ride on those roads. Some of those roads could be incorporated into the multi-use trail system and make for a much more diverse system. There are many people that are beginners and youth that do not want to go on a minimum of a two hour loop ride. With the current system there are two loops that interconnect riding on a gaited horse at a good pace each loop is about a two hour riding not stopping for lunch or a break. If you opened up some of these gravel roads it would give people more options and the more options on riding the less impact on trails and this gives people that do not have the time or the skills to ride for two or four hours more options. We are requesting that we are allowed to ride on more of the gravel roads to make a more diverse trail system and that we can have some input on the design of the new equestrian parking lot. We believe in the Departments mission to protect and manage the forest, fish and wildlife resources of the state but also to provide recreation to the area. The back of a horse is the only way many of our chapter members are able to get out into the backwoods and enjoy seeing and hearing the wildlife, seeing the beauty of the glades and ridges the conservation has to offer so the trail system is very important to many equestrian in Franklin County and surrounding areas. We also try to give back to the area though volunteering to help maintain the trails and keep them free of litter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Little Indian Creek CA Management Plan, and, on behalf of Missouri's trail riders, thank you for permitting equestrian use of the trails on this CA. The public land riding opportunity provided on Little Indian Creek CA helps to meet the needs of the many riders in Franklin and Washington Counties and the Greater St. Louis Area.

The 12.1 miles of trails on the CA is enough to attract trail riders and provide them with a quality outdoor experience. Thank you for that.

Management Objective 3, Strategy 2 states a need to modify/reroute some trails in some locations to minimize trail maintenance efforts, and, I'm sure, reduce resource damage on poorly located trail segments. Show-Me Missouri Back Country Horsemen offers expert assistance in this effort, subject to availability of qualified volunteers.

Management Objective 3, Strategy 3 states a need to expand horse trailer parking. SMMBCH membership includes personnel with extensive experience in design, layout and construction of practical horse trailer parking facilities. Subject to availability of said personnel, SMMBCH offers assistance to the Department in accomplishing this needed improvement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

I love Indian Creek, like to trailride on my horse there, as I live close. My only complaint is, I get lost frequently. It would be nice if the trails were marked better and updated trail maps were available.

Thanks for providing such a beautiful conservation area for the public to enjoy.

Sincerely